

## ARCHAEOLOGY IN GREECE 2017–2018

### A survey of Late Bronze Age funerary archaeology over the last 25 years in the central and southern Aegean

Yannis Galanakis (University of Cambridge, [ig298@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ig298@cam.ac.uk))

This contribution offers a brief survey of funerary archaeology undertaken in the central and southern Aegean over the course of the last 25 years. Major construction projects and salvage and systematic excavations have brought to light some 1,700 new Late Bronze Age tombs (i.e. 27% of the extant corpus). Despite these discoveries, however, very few tombs have received a final publication and few of these projects are context driven. New data are and will continue to be desirable – but it is the quality of recording these data, our research questions and the careful application of new methodologies, during and after excavation, that will open up new interpretative avenues and debates. With the number of secure archaeological contexts dwindling fast, not least because of the constant threat of looting, developing new approaches (for example understanding site formation and episodes of use) is crucial if we are to recover as much as possible and advance our knowledge of the multivalent roles played by burials within ancient societies.

Twenty years have passed since the publication of *A Private Place: Death in Prehistoric Greece* by William Cavanagh and Christopher Mee (1998) and Olivier Pelon's update (1998) on the state of research on tholos tombs. Almost the same time has lapsed since the last island-wide survey of LBA tombs in Crete by Wanda Löwe (1996). Therefore, when I was asked to write a review of LBA tombs by the Editor of the *Archaeological Reports*, I thought it would be appropriate to offer a brief update on the state of research of the last 20 to 25 years with regards to funerary archaeology in southern Greece. After all, the *Archaiologikon Deltion*, *Chronique des Fouilles*, and *Archaeological Reports* have all proved for generations of scholars a first port of call for new discoveries. Given the timing of publication, I would like to dedicate this short contribution to the aforementioned researchers who, with their syntheses, gave us all a starting point for further exploration paving the way for the advancement of knowledge through discussion and debate.

Since the 1860s, the total number of LBA tombs known in the southern Aegean has risen to ca. 6200. In the last 25 years alone, more than 1686 tombs (ca. 27% of the extant corpus) have been discovered at 207 sites,<sup>1</sup> some well-known, others totally new. To compile this survey, I relied on the *Archaiologikon Deltion* (up to number 68, published in 2017), *Archaeology in Greece Online*, conferences and their proceedings, specialised studies, local and international, as well as newspaper reports and the *Ergo Eforeion* (2000–2010). The following tables summarise the tombs discovered in the last 25 years per type and by number of sites per region. The five maps that accompany this contribution help illustrate their distribution (arranged by type) (**maps to be added**). Without final publications for most of the tombs, it is difficult at present to offer a refined listing based on dates of construction and use, though reference to some of the most important discoveries is made below.

Tombs per type (last 25 years)	Number
Tholos & tholoid tombs	89 (at 42 sites)
Chamber tombs	809 (at 125 sites)
Built chamber tombs	21 (at 13 sites)
Pit caves & double pits	54 (at 6 sites)
Shaft graves	8 (at 3 sites)
Pits, cists and other graves	705 (at 56 sites)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1686</b>

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<sup>1</sup> For comparison, Cavanagh and Mee (1998) listed 442 sites for all prehistoric burials, excluding Crete.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Sites</b>
Crete	30
Thessaly (incl. Olympos & Skyros)	27
Elis	20
Phthiotis & Phocis	20
Messenia	18
Argolid & Corinthia	17
Achaea	15
Attica & Saronic Gulf	14
Laconia & Kythera	13
West Greece	10
Dodecanese	7
West Turkey	5
Boeotia	3
Cyclades	3
NE Aegean	2
Arcadia	1
Euboea	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>

The record of publication of funeral contexts has always been uneven in Aegean archaeology. For example, some tombs types, especially shaft graves, tholoi, and chamber tombs, have consistently received more prominence in archaeological discourse than others. At the same time, while some tombs and cemeteries received a first publication before WW II (e.g. at Knossos, Dendra, Mycenae and Prosymna to name but a few notable sites), they fall short of modern practices, especially during excavation which later hampers publication and limits interpretation.

Following broader developments in archaeology in the last 25 years, a lot of effort is noticeable in integrating different aspects and not solely focusing on the objects discovered in the tombs, which for a long time formed the main preoccupation of excavators and scholars. Bio-archaeology, zooarchaeology,<sup>2</sup> archaeobotany, micromorphology, section drawings, digital recording, archival integration, and an attempt to better understand episodes of use, tomb construction, landscape associations as well as of the rituals involved are now becoming integral to excavation planning. If we are to identify attitudes to death, taking a holistic approach to the excavation of funeral contexts is imperative. There is certainly a lot still to be done, not least as most contexts remain unpublished and the cost of excavating them carefully is considerable and often requires time. However, as most of the tombs and their associated burials will continue to be excavated as part of rescue excavations – with limited or no specialists and equipment at hand for assistance – it is vital for excavators to have the necessary training (e.g. how and what to record, how to take samples and from what contexts, how best to proceed with the excavation of demanding digs etc.). This way the

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<sup>2</sup> Despite the advances in zooarchaeology in all periods of Greek archaeology, it appears that in Mycenaean contexts at least, when good contextual information exists, the presence or burials of animals was an exceptional rather than a customary act. In that end, the discovery of more horse burials near chamber tombs 2, 15 and 16 at Dendra constitutes an intriguing case study (ID2413, 4421) (Pappi and Isaakidou 2015).

collection of data will be improved significantly and any future study of the excavated material for publication will be immensely facilitated.

In short: it is not simply more data that we need (we already have plenty) – it is the quality of data, our research questions and the application of careful methodologies in the course of excavation that will help us advance knowledge. It is indeed worth remarking that the last 20 years witnessed important strides in the excavation of LBA tombs and their associated burials; while the 1980s and 1990s were described by advances at a theoretical level in Aegean archaeology, the 2000s and 2010s have been more methodologically focused.

Although undoubtedly a lot still needs to be done, the record of publication is improving steadily, often generously supported by INSTAP. The same is true for the now more systematic preliminary reporting of tombs and the restudy of old material based on modern standards (e.g. at Pylos in Messenia, Kakovatos in Elis, Kazarma and Argos in the Argolid, Eleona Langada on Kos, etc. to mention but a few cases).

To my knowledge, more than 40 PhDs have been written since the mid-1990s, some later published as monographs. Some have a regional or inter-regional focus (e.g. Löwe 1996 and Preston 2000 on Crete; Evangelou 2009 on central Crete; Psallida 2012 on East Crete; Salavoura 2015 on Arcadia; Boyd 2002 and Zavadil 2013 on SW Peloponnese; Nikolentzos 2009 on Elis; Sjöberg 2004 on the Argolid; Voutsaki 1993 on Argolid, Thessaly and the Dodecanese; Georgiadis 2003 and Eerbeek 2014 on the Dodecanese, etc.),<sup>3</sup> while others examine particular tomb types (e.g. Papadimitriou 2001 on Built chamber tombs, Galanakis 2007 on tholos tombs, Lewartowski 2000 on ‘simple graves’, etc.). Some other studies have discussed whole cemeteries (e.g. Alberti 2004; Kaskantiri 2016; Kolonas 1998; Malapani 2015; Müller 1995; Papadimitriou-Grammenou 2003; Papadopoulou 2015; Papadopoulou-Chrysikopoulou 2015; Paschalidis 2014; Vikatou 2009, etc.), or focus on specific aspects of funeral archaeology in general (e.g. Effinger 1996 on jewellery; Fitzsimons 2006 on elite architecture at Mycenae; Gallou 2005 and Hristova 2010 on ritual; Giannopoulos 2008, Grigoropoulos 2011 and Steinmann 2012 on warrior burials; Kountouri 2002 on pottery; Leith 2013 on gender; Pomadère 2007 on children; Iezzi 2005, Nafplioti 2007 and Moutafi 2015 on LBA bioarchaeology, etc.).

There are also important final publications of old or more recent excavations: e.g. to name but a few, Ayia Sotira in the Nemea valley (Smith et al. 2017), Mochlos in east Crete (Soles et al. 2008, Smith 2010, Soles and Davaras 2011), Kalochoraphitis in south central Crete (Karetsou and Girella 2015), Pylona on Rhodes (Karantzali 2001), Chalandritsa in Achaea (Aktypi 2017), Aigion in Achaea (Papadopoulos and Papadopoulou-Chrysikopoulou 2017), Vravron in Attica (Papadopoulos and Kontorli-Papadopoulou 2014), Merenda in Attica (Salavoura 2006), Lazarides on Aegina (Eustratiou and Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 2016) and Strephi in Elis (Nikolentzos 2016).

The publication of specialised edited volumes has helped further embed the different strands of archaeological research together. Recent volumes include *Staging Death* (Dakouri-Hild and Boyd 2017), *Embodied Identities* (Mina et al. 2016), *Metaphysis* (Alram-Stern et al. 2016), *Mycenaeans up to date* (Schallin and Tournavitou 2015), *New directions in the skeletal biology of Greece* (Schepartz et al. 2009) and the forthcoming proceedings of the 17th International Aegean conference on *Mneme. Past and Memory in the Aegean Bronze*

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<sup>3</sup> For a synthesis of tombs and cemeteries in Attica see also Privitera 2013.

*Age and on (Social) Place and Space in Early Mycenaean Greece* that include several papers dealing with funerary matters. There is also a very large number of articles in journals and of regionally-focused conferences, which in a short review like this would be impossible to do justice.<sup>4</sup> Depending on interests, readers are encouraged to search relevant titles via *Nestor* <https://classics.uc.edu/nestor>

Despite the important technological developments which now facilitate research and expedite publication, traditional records remain equally important: e.g., the surfacing of Stamatakis' diaries of the 1876-77 excavation of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae now allows us for the first time to associate most of the discovered objects with particular burials (see the four 'Mycenae Revisited' articles by Lena Papazoglou-Manioudaki and her team in *BSA* 104 (2009, two articles), 105 (2010), 107 (2012), the article by Eleni Konstantinidi-Syvridi 2018 on Shaft Grave III and Konstantinos Paschalidis' forthcoming work on Shaft Grave IV). All in all, the key word here is 'integration' of the different strands in the funerary archaeology of the southern Aegean during the LBA – where once we had 'appendices' of specialised studies, we should now be aiming to offer an integrated interpretation of funeral archaeology; a social archaeology of death completely interwoven with the world of the living,<sup>5</sup> with sound methodology and clear theoretical awareness of the problems at stake.

In what follows, I offer a brief survey and commentary of recent discoveries arranged by tomb type. In the last 25 years, 89 **new tholos tombs** out of more 300 known examples ([MAP 1](#)) have been discovered at 42 sites, some in regions and sites where previously none was known: e.g. at Amphissa (ID4746), Corinth (ID2492, 4503), Megali Magoula near Galatas (ID1935), Sparta Polydendro (Kozí) (ID2553), Archontiki at Psara (ID520, 1285) and Kos (*JHS/AR* 1998-99, 107 and *JHS/AR* 2003-04, 73). For some time, it was thought that the region north of the Alpheios River in Elis, up to the borders with Achaea, behaved differently from adjacent regions, especially Messenia where tholoi proliferate. Discoveries made there in recent years have now overturned this hypothesis: tholos tombs have been discovered at Portes (Kolonas 2009a), Triantaphyllia Koryphi (ID2509), and Vartholomio, Katsiveri (10m external diam., ID1896 and extensively by Christos Mantzanas in *ADelt* 64 (2009), 381-386 and *ADelt* 65 (2010), pp. 796-818). More tholoi have come to light in west Greece, e.g. at Kechrinia Valtou (ID2391) and Katouna Perganti<sup>6</sup> (between Tryphos and Katouna, 7.12m diam.), and for the first time on Lefkas at Ayios Niketas (ID432).

The three regions with the highest numbers of tholoi in the LBA Aegean, Messenia, Thessaly and Crete, continued to yield several new examples: e.g. Platanovrysi (*ADelt* 2001-2004, B4, 419-420), Romanos (ID2571), Kephlovryso (ID324), Ambelophyto (ID4339) in Messenia; Kazanaki in the ring road of Volos (ID1102), and Rachoula near Karditsa (diam. 9m, ID5662, 6346, 6404) in Thessaly; and Margarites (Papadopoulou 2006), Kaminaki (ID2871,

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<sup>4</sup> Notable are also the advances in DNA and strontium analysis (e.g. the work of Nafplioti 2011) and micromorphology (Karkanas et al. 2012). Two important recent articles published this year include Murray's (2018) work on Perati and Jones et al. (2018) on radiocarbon dating of the multiple levels of use from the Mycenaean tholos tomb of Petroto in Achaea. In general, we need more radiocarbon dates from funeral contexts and more extensive use of GIS (the most important work to date is the PhD by Efkleidou 2014; for some other attempts see Jazwa and Jazwa 2017 and the MA theses by Svenson 2013 and Sharma 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Although we now know more Mycenaean settlements than 25 years ago, the correlation and understanding of the relationship between cemeteries and settlements remains limited as the former continue to be mostly investigated as part of salvage excavations. A better integration of the two can indeed yield fruitful results in the future.

<sup>6</sup> Poster presentation by O. Vikatou and V. Tsantila in the 3rd International Interdisciplinary Colloquium 'The Periphery of the Mycenaean World', Lamia, 18-21 May 2018.

3572), Kalamafka (ID3571, 4547), Kera Pediados (ID3575) and Azoria (ID184 and Eaby 2010<sup>7</sup>) in Crete.

An interesting development is the discovery of clusters of small tholos tombs at Aerino (Arachoviti 2000) and Koryphoula Kanalia (ID1039, 4014, 4017, 5091) in eastern Thessaly near the bay of Volos which in terms of contents and funeral behaviour are similar to rock-cut chamber tombs or small and crudely built ‘tholoid’ built chamber tombs in other regions (e.g. Palaiochori and Vaskina in Laconia or Lazarides in Aegina). Inspired by these clusters and practices in the broader Aegean appear to be the tholoid tombs at Panaztepe, now inland and near Smyrna, but once set on the slopes of a small island in the Aegean (Erkanal Öktü 2008). In eastern Thessaly, small LBA tholoi were built in Neolithic houses, as e.g. attested at Koutroulou Magoula (ID2902, 5571), Kanalia Tsingenina (ID1990, 4013) and tholos B at Pteleos, excavated by Verdelis in 1952.

Although it is still widely believed that tholoi first developed in Messenia at the end of the MBA, recent discoveries in Corinthia (ID2492, 4503) and Megali Magoula near Galatas (ID1935) suggest that this type may have started to spread across the Aegean earlier than previously thought (and possibly already in LH I). Equally important is the suggestion of Stocker and Davis (2015) that monumental tholoi may already have made an appearance at the end of the MBA (e.g. tholos IV at Pylos).

**Chamber tombs** form the most popular LBA tomb type in the southern Aegean (MAP 2). Of the ca. 4000 examples, more than 809 have been discovered in the last 25 years at 125 sites. Extensive cemeteries of chamber tombs have come to light in recent years in several regions across Greece: e.g. at Voudeni (>80 examples, Kolonas 2009b) and Portes (30 examples, Kolonas 2009a) in Achaea,<sup>8</sup> Ayia Triada in Elis (50 examples, Vikatou 2009), Kompotadhes in Phthiotis (54 examples since 2009, ID6354), and Sikyon in Corinthia (about 20 chamber tombs, ID4516). At Vari Kamini (ID4979) in Attica, 45 chamber tombs and 13 pits were found some 30m SE of the Varkiza Mycenaean cemetery. Dating mostly to the 14th and 13th c. BC, among the finds were 309 intact vessels. An important discovery is also the extensive cemetery at Kolikrepi, about 2km east of Spata where 53 chamber tombs, at least 3 pit-caves and 4 double pits came to light. The first chamber tombs were built in LH I, i.e. they are the earliest known of this type in Attica. Use of the Kolikrepi cemetery continued to LH IIIC (Stathi and Psallida 2015).

Apart from the aforementioned extensive cemeteries, several other new sites have been discovered: e.g. at Mageiras Kioupia near Olympia (ID1899), Loutra Heraias in Arcadia (ID306), Peristeri in Laconia (ID314, 2555), Aliveri on Euboea,<sup>9</sup> Kentri near Ierapetra<sup>10</sup> and Pilavtepe in Milas, southwest Turkey (Benter 2009; 2010) to name but a few. Work at well-established cemeteries continued to yield several more chamber tombs: e.g. at Mycenae, at

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<sup>7</sup> I have refrained from including here the more numerous LM IIIC-EIA examples, which are otherwise exhaustively presented in the PhD of Melissa Eaby (2007).

<sup>8</sup> Voudeni and Portes are among the best presented Mycenaean funerary archaeological sites. Portes is also impressive for the variety of its funerary forms: BCTs covered by tumuli, tholos tombs, pits/cists and chamber tombs.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.culture.gr/el/Information/SitePages/view.aspx?nID=2348>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.culture.gr/el/Information/SitePages/view.aspx?nID=2339>

Englianos (ID5104) and Antheia Ellinika (ID1501) in Messenia, Chania in Crete,<sup>11</sup> Miletus (Akat İslam and Aslan 2015) and Müskebi-Ortakent<sup>12</sup> in southwestern Turkey.

At Aptera near Chania (ID1869), a chamber tomb came to light some 150m NW of five other LMIIIA2-B chamber tombs excavated in the late 1960s at Kalami. It was equipped with two underground chambers and its excavation yielded some 100 vessels dating from LM II to LM IIIA. The two chambers appear to be virtually contemporary. According to the excavator, Eleni Papadopoulou, it is possible that the tomb marks a transition between multi-chambered Minoan tombs and the more regulated Mycenaean variety (ID1869).

Among the chamber tombs discovered in the last 25 years, there are also some monumental examples like the one discovered at Glyka Nera (Vorylla plot, ID2258), two examples at Mageiras Kioupia near Olympia (ID1899), a third example at Mycenae Asprochoma (Palaologou forthcoming), and tomb 15 at Ellinika Antheia (ID1501), second only in size to tomb 6 from the same site. The tombs at Prosilio (ID6170), a new site in northern Boeotia, belong to an extensive chamber tomb cemetery most likely associated with ancient Orchomenos. The monumental tomb 2 excavated there in 2017 yielded the first intact burial – that of a man – in a chamber tomb of this type and size. With the number of undiscovered and unlooted archaeological contexts dwindling, the need for properly resourced and strategic fieldwork becomes ever more acute, especially if we are to learn more about the bio- and social archaeology of the deceased population in the LBA Aegean.

Indeed, in recent years emphasis in the excavation of chamber tombs has been placed on improving the methodology and collection of data, and focusing on reconstructing the social archaeology of the population buried therein. This approach has already yielded significant results and better insights with regards to episodes of use, ritual practices and a finer grasp of the manipulation of bones and objects by the living, e.g. as illustrated by the excellent publications of the ASCSA at Ayia Sotira and Mochlos mentioned above. In the past, it was frequent to describe the tombs as ‘looted’. Although this may well still be the case in a number of instances, more careful excavation methodologies start to reveal intentional ‘disturbances’ by the living, in the LBA, as part of actions associated with visits to the grave (e.g. opening/closure ceremonies, preparation for new burial/re-burial or to check the structural condition of the tomb).<sup>13</sup> These finer approaches help us understand not only what people placed in a particular grave (in terms of objects) but also what they did there and how they interacted with the structure, the burials and the overall material deposited therein – all very important aspects for understanding site and regional attitudes to death as well as similarities and differences across periods and regions.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> E.g. at Kouklaki, Rovithakis, Malefakis plots, Dimotiko Stadio and Dimokratias street, since 1996; for the important Kouklaki cluster, see the detailed report by Andreadaki-Vlasaki in *ADelt* 60 (2005), pp. 1012-1018; also, Andreadaki-Vlasaki and Protopapadaki 2009, 152-165; Wiener 2015.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ege/arkeoloji-muzesi-50-yilini-kutladi-27533974>

<sup>13</sup> For another notable instance, see the Kazanaki tholos tombs in the ring road of Volos: Adrymi-Sismani and Alexandrou 2009; Papathanasiou 2009; Galanakis 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Despite recent discoveries, the number of LH I-IIIB chamber tombs remains low (<100) in a number of regions: e.g. in Aitolokarnania, the Cyclades, Euboea, the Ionian Islands, Phocis, Laconia, Messenia, Thessaly, the NE Aegean and western Turkey. In contrast, chamber tombs proliferate in Achaea, Elis, the NE Peloponnese, Attica, Phthiotis, Crete, and the Dodecanese (mostly Rhodes and Kos).



Only 3 sites, yielded **shaft graves** in recent years (MAP 3): the early LBA ‘warrior burial’ at Plasi, Marathon,<sup>15</sup> the LH II ‘Griffin Warrior’ at the Palace of Nestor (ID5577), and the six LM II-III A1 shaft graves at Chania (Kouklaki plot, Isopedon Mazali). The discovery at Pylos was made in May 2015 on the resumption of excavations at the Palace of Nestor for the first time since 1969. The shaft grave, a stone-built chamber (ca. 2x1.05m, 1.50m deep), yielded ca. 1500 individual objects accompanying the extended burial of a single man, 30-35 years old at death. The body had been buried in a wooden coffin. The bottom course of the chamber consisted of large ashlar blocks, perhaps repurposed from some earlier building on the acropolis. Various grave offerings had been placed in and on top of the coffin and in the shaft around it. These included stone and metal beads, other jewellery, seals, carved ivories, metal vessels of gold, silver, and bronze, and bronze weapons. The four impressive gold signet rings and an agate seal with a ‘combat’ engraving of astonishing quality have been promptly published by Stocker and Davis (2017; and Davis and Stocker 2016). It is also worth noting the almost complete absence of ceramics and the large number of jewellery associated with an elite male burial (a practice also attested in chamber tomb 2 at Prosilio in Boeotia (ID6170), almost a hundred years after the Griffin warrior burial).

The discoveries made in 2003-2005 (ID2004) at Isopedon Mazali (Kouklaki plot) next to the church of St Paul and Peter at Chania have added important new information for the funerary archaeology of LM II-III B Crete (more references also in note 11). The 53 LBA tombs, revealed in an area of 1680m<sup>2</sup>, were of three different types: pit-caves (32 examples, largely unrobbed), chamber tombs (15 examples)<sup>16</sup> and six shaft graves. Grave goods in the shaft graves were relatively few: nine ceramic vessels and 12 items of bronze were recovered, along with items in other materials, but a large number of these came from the LM III A1 Tomb 46. The shaft (1.4x2.9m and 3m deep) was lined at the bottom with rough masonry, producing a smaller burial chamber (roughly 1x2.2m and 1.54m high). Within lay a male (some 35 years old), tall and well-built, with large facial features. Grave goods comprise a small piriform jar, a bronze vessel and razor, a cornelian seal, and items echoing a ‘military’ status (i.e. a long sword with bone pommel and gold embellishments, three spearheads and several arrows). The combination of the three tomb types and the practices attested therein find their best parallel in the tombs at Knossos and especially the Zapher Papoura cemetery excavated in 1903-04 by Arthur Evans and his team.

The number of **pit caves** and ‘**double pits**’ has recently increased significantly (MAP 3) with new discoveries at Chania (32 examples as mentioned above, the earliest pit-cave dating to LM II and yielding a ‘warrior burial’), at Kolikrepi near Spata (at least 3 examples), Sikyon (ID4516) and Agia Agathi Malonas on Rhodes (6 examples; ID3378, 5594; Zervaki 2011). So far, these tombs, with more than 100 known examples, are more popular at Chania, followed closely by Knossos, and in the NE Peloponnese and Attica than in other regions of the Aegean. No proper study of these tombs has taken place and with the new material now available, there is a lot that can be done.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.onalert.gr/stories/marathwnas-ta-prwta-sumperasmata-gia-ta-tafo-tou-polemisth-tou-1600-px/55588>

<sup>16</sup> Chamber tomb 13 was found unlooted and contained several bronze objects, similar to tomb 14 at Zapher Papoura near Knossos.

<sup>17</sup> For some recently discovered funerary ‘hybrids’, between a chamber tomb and a pit cave, in Elis (Strephi and Arvanitis) see Lambropoulos et al. 2009. For other ‘hybrids’ (similar to the ‘BCTs’ at Vaskina and Palaiochori in Laconia, also upland locations), see the tombs at Sykia Desfinas (ID5083) and Kastrouli in Phocis, probably also dictated by the local geology: *AR* 2016-2017, 33 and Sideris et al. 2017.

Papadimitriou's excellent study of **Built Chamber Tombs** (BCTs) gathered all known examples to 2001.<sup>18</sup> In the last 25 years, 21 new BCTs at 13 sites have come to light (MAP 3): e.g. at Portes in Achaea (Kolonas 2009a; Moschos and Gazis 2008; Moschos 2000), Vrysari Kalavryton (*ADelt* 67 [2012], 288-293), Eleon in Boeotia (ID5065, 5442, 6179) and the elaborate tomb 73 Mitrou in Phthiotis (ID806, 1359, 2684, 3062, 4214; *JHS/AR* 2009-10, p. 92). BCTs, as already suggested by Papadimitriou, appear to form a product of the funerary architectural competition, experimentation and elaboration observed across several regions and sites in the southern Aegean during the late MBA and early LBA.

Most of the BCTs appear to express the agendas of emerging local elites and a number of early BCTs include architectural refinements and their location was pronounced further by enclosure walls and/or the construction of a tumulus marking their position. Once such impressive example, a 'grave rectangle' instead of a 'grave circle', is the enclosure called 'the Blue Stone Structure (BSS)' at Eleon (ID5065, 5442, 6179), so named because of the polished blue limestone used to cap a large, rectangular perimeter wall. The structure was capped with a mound of clay and contained two standing grave stele and marked an early Mycenaean cemetery of some significance dating to the formative period of Mycenaean society, ca. 17th c. BC. Within several graves have been investigated, including a number of BCTs, the excavation of which will undoubtedly enhance further our understanding of early LBA practices.

Distribution-wise, BCTs are found as far north as Thessaly (as also suggested by the recent discovery of a BCT, ca. 3.80x2.70-3.30m, at Dimini)<sup>19</sup> to as far south as southern Peloponnese (e.g. the BCT at Sparta town: Psychiko, ID1938). These tombs continued to be built in LH IIIA, see e.g. the BCTs at Aerino<sup>20</sup> and at Beis Plot at Dimini in Thessaly (ID5094) and the tombs at Lazarides on Aegina (Eustratiou and Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 2016). Some of these examples are also difficult to classify by our modern typologies as they also share features of tholos architecture. Caution therefore is needed when working with 'types' as we should assess the behaviour of these tombs locally (at a site level) and regionally before comparing them across the Aegean (and this is the case not just with BCTs but with all tomb 'types').

The second largest category of tombs that have come to light in recent years, some 705 examples at 56 sites, are pits, cists, and other '**simple**' graves (MAP 4). The term 'simple' is certainly problematic as it makes us think as if these tombs are socially and politically 'inferior' to other more complex (architecturally and artefactually speaking) structures. Humble as most of these tombs may look, they should be locally and regionally assessed before generically being described as 'simple', not least as some clearly had a more complex life than the name suggests and could have formed the focus of significant social actions.

Unfortunately, 'simple graves are often superficially reported. Yet they are popular and widely distributed and their discovery in large numbers in recent years forms a considerable increase to the ca. 1200 'simple graves' recorded by Lewartowski in his important study (2000). The single most significant concentration of these tombs are the ca. 160 tombs at Archontiki on Psara, all cists with the exception of one tholos tomb (ID520, 1285; *JHS/AR*

<sup>18</sup> As I include examples of the last 25 years, there is some overlap with BCTs already mentioned in Papadimitriou's 2001 study.

<sup>19</sup> <https://e-thessalia.gr/megalos-omadikos-tafos-apokalyfthike-sto-dimini/>

<sup>20</sup> The material from the Aerino tombs is on display in the Volos museum and there are very good information panels on site (<http://efamagvolos.culture.gr/Aerino%20ODHGOS.pdf>, text by Polyxeni Arachoviti).



2004-05, 90). Pits, cists and other ‘simple’ graves are widely attested – with the exception of Crete, where they are rare, they appear to be frequent in the early LBA on mainland Greece and during LH IIIA-B in the outskirts of the palatial world or relatively remote areas, which also favoured these types geologically (from Epirus and the area of Kozani, River Haliacmon, and Platamonas in the north<sup>21</sup> to several sites in the upland Peloponnese, e.g. Vaskina Socha: ID2420).

The tombs at Ayios Vasileios’ North Cemetery (ID6125) illustrate the complexity of mortuary practices in ‘simple graves’ (typologically speaking) in southern Greece at the onset of the Mycenaean era, when formal cemeteries, larger tombs, richer burials and a more complex ritual sequence involving multiple interments was systematically introduced. Drawing on current advances in archaeoethanatology, forensic science, and analysis of commingled remains, the publication by Moutafi and Voutsaki (2016) offers an integrated approach which aims to reconcile archaeological theory with current methodological advances in bioarchaeology and funerary taphonomy and seeks to reconstruct, quite convincingly in my view, the funerary activities in far greater detail than before in order to fully observe variation and change, and, ultimately, understand how this considerable variation may inform us on the re-definition of social relations at death, or shifting notions of the self. This important study demonstrated a considerable extent of variation in funerary disposal and secondary treatment during this transitional period, which if we were to study only the objects from these graves we would be able to identify). For Moutafi and Voutsaki, this variation reflects the transformation of society at Ayios Vasileios: from narrower (possibly household-based) associations to increasingly wider concepts of lineage and descent as well as tensions between tradition and innovation at a site level.

Another significant recent discovery was that of a ‘warrior burial’ in a cist tomb at Kouvaras (ID434) on the height of Rachouli, north of Lake Ozerou in Aitolokarnania, in a strategic location overlooking the pass from the interior of Akarnania to the Gulf of Ambracia (Stavropoulou-Gatsi et al. 2012). In addition to four 14th-century ceramic vessels, the tomb contained valuable and sometimes unique offerings – offensive and defensive weapons, a gold kylix with a high stem of an LH IIIC ceramic type, and a bronze tripod embellished with new features akin to later developments (mixed handles, curved supports between the legs and body of the lebes). The offensive weaponry included a very long (0.94m) bronze Naue II sword with gold wire wrapped around the handle, a further bronze sword of Sandars type F with a bone handle, a leaf-shaped spearhead of Mycenaean type, an arrowhead with a long tang, and a bimetal knife of Italian origin or type (the blade is iron and the handle bronze with bone inlay held with bronze nails). The defensive weaponry includes a pair of greaves with wire points for lacing of a type known from Calabria to Enkomi.

With regards to somewhat **unexpected discoveries**, one can list the ‘Mycenaean ossuary’ at Xagounaki near Alepotrypa Cave, Diros (ID4889). In the overlying levels was a round bone-enclosure, 4m in diameter, defined by field stones and with a pebble floor. A large quantity of human skeletal remains representing tens of individuals in secondary deposition was collected from the floor surface, together with characteristic LH III objects (e.g. pottery, beads, and a dagger). Given the scarcity of Mycenaean sites from the immediate vicinity of

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<sup>21</sup> This brief survey does not include tombs from Northern Greece with ‘Mycenaean’ or ‘Mycenaeanising’ material for which a proper study would be useful to have. For an intriguing discovery see Valla et al. 2013 at Phaia Petra in eastern Macedonia.

the cave, this is indeed an extraordinary discovery. In the 4th Archaeological Meeting of Crete, M. Milidakis and E. Papadopoulou (2016) offered a preliminary report on the important discovery at Kera near Kalyves (Chania, Crete) of two small chamber tombs, two pithos burials and some 104 ‘ritual pits’ dating to LM IIIB-C.

Despite the long economic crisis, the Greek archaeological service with all its associated staff, the Greek universities and research institutes, and their foreign colleagues have all continued to make great discoveries bringing to light contexts that shape our discourse and expand our knowledge on LBA funerary practices and attitudes to death across the Aegean. They have also continued to train the next generation of field archaeologists, necessary for the successful continuation of research. Technological advances, our research questions, and finer methodologies help nowadays collect better quality data which in the years to come will offer a deeper understanding of uniformity and diversity in the six centuries that shaped this crucial period for Aegean affairs, socially and politically, helping us move beyond issues of social organisation to more nuanced aspects of funerary practice and refine our knowledge of the multivalent roles played by burials within ancient societies.

Despite the increasing costs and demands, in human power and expertise in organising a well-tuned excavation, Aegean archaeology is now richer in knowledge, methods and practices – and so is the funerary archaeology of the LBA which includes one of the finest corpora for study and debate. What surprises will the next 25 years hold for the field? We await with great anticipation.

## Abbreviations

ADelt = Archaiologikon Deltion

AR = Archaeological Reports (new series)

ASCSA = American School of Classical Studies at Athens

BCT(s) = Built Chamber Tomb(s)

Ergo Eforeion = <https://www.culture.gr/anaskafes/index.html>

ID = refers to ID numbers in *Archaeology in Greece* online <http://chronique.efa.gr/>

JHS/AR = Journal of Hellenic Studies/Archaeological Reports (old series)

LBA = Late Bronze Age

MBA = Middle Bronze Age

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## **MAPS**

**MAP 1:** Distribution of tholos and tholoid built tombs discovered in the last 25 years.

**MAP 2-3:** Distribution of chamber tombs discovered in the last 25 years.

**MAP 4:** Distribution of BCTs, pit-caves, double pits and shaft graves discovered in the last 25 years.

**MAP 5:** Distribution of 'simple graves' (pits, cists and other tombs) discovered in the last 25 years.

(see below for list of sites per map)

**NOTE to Editor:** ID numbers are based on *Archaeology in Greece online* – they are geotagged. These numbers should not appear on the maps or captions; they are for geo-reference only (i.e. for the creation of the maps). All sites should be numbered (starting with 1 for each map). The caption accompanying each map should include all site names as listed below (for an example see *Archaeological Reports* 2016-17, p. 108, Map 9).

**MAP 1:** Distribution of tholos and tholoid built tombs discovered in the last 25 years.

Ancient Corinth (ID4503)  
Megali Magoula (ID1935)  
Rachoula (ID6404)  
Koutroulou Magoula (ID5571)  
Koryphoula Kanalia (ID4017)  
Kanalia Tsingenina (ID4013)  
Aerino  
Kazanaki Volos (ID1102)  
Amphissa (ID4746)  
Moschovi Loutrakiou  
Stamna  
Katouna Perganti  
Kechrinia Valtou (ID2391)  
Ayios Nikitas (ID432)  
Poros Tzanata  
Petroto Mygdalia  
Portes  
Triantaphyllia Koryphi (ID2509)  
Vartholomio Katsiveri (ID1896)  
Kephalovryso Chalvatsou (ID324)  
Nichoria Lakkoules  
Platanovrysi  
Kaplani  
Diodia  
Chalkias  
Litharolakka Ambelophyto (ID4339)  
P.O.T.A. Romanos (ID2571)  
Sparta Polydendro (Kozi) (ID2553)  
Psara Archontiki (ID1285)  
Kos (Mesaria/Giorgaras)  
Kos town  
Krousonas  
Perama Margarites  
Zenia Mirambello  
Karphi (ID2898)  
Kera Pediados (ID3575)  
Kalamafka (ID3571, 4547)  
Kaminaki (ID2871, 3572)  
Azorias (ID184, 765)  
Panaztepe

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**MAP 2-3:** Distribution of chamber tombs discovered in the last 25 years.

Athenian Agora (ID5893)  
Akti Kalamakiou (ID2466)  
Glyka Nera (ID5358)  
Eleusis (ID6134)  
Markopoulo (ID1764)  
Merenda - New Hippodrome (ID2121)  
Vourvatsi (ID2280)  
Vari Kamini (ID4979)  
Porto Raphiti  
Spata Kolikrepi  
Thebes  
Prosilio (ID6170)  
Zeli Agios Georgios  
Kolaka (Kyrtone)  
Megaplatanos  
Tragana  
Mexiates  
Elateia Alonaki  
Modi  
Golemi Agios Ioannis  
Exarchos  
Kalapodi Kokkalia  
Kompotadhes (ID6354)  
Spartia (ID4623)  
Velesino  
Panariti  
Aria Agios Vlasia  
Aidonia (ID4509)  
Nemea (ID3886)  
Ancient Epidauros Nera (ID1458)  
Mycenae  
Thalero  
Kryoneri (Panagia or Ayios Nikolaos)  
Athikia: Ayios Nikolaos  
Kato Almyri  
Gyriza (ID4504)  
Sikyon (ID4516)  
Trapeza  
Daphni Lakkathela (ID1531)  
Chelidoni (ID4313)  
Krini Zoitada (ID4359)  
Spaliareika  
Kalamaki Elaiochoriou  
Mitopolis  
Voudeni  
Portes  
Kallithea (Laganidia & Rabadania)  
Chalandritsa

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**Krini (Agios Konstantinos)**  
**Manesi Kalavryton**  
**Vrysari (Goumenissa)**  
**Nikoleika (ID427)**  
**Loutra Heraias (ID306)**  
**Tragano Markopoulou (ID1528)**  
**Persaina Goumero (ID4312)**  
**Koskinas: Lakkopholia (ID1519)**  
**Mageiras: Kioupia (ID1899)**  
**Kafkania: Karavas (ID2508)**  
**Agraphidochori: Kotrona (ID1524)**  
**Olympia (New Museum**  
**Vouzani, Klindia (ID4311)**  
**Kafkania Glinatses**  
**Agia Triada**  
**Latas Alonaki**  
**Vrochitsa**  
**Pefkes**  
**Arvanitis**  
**Strephi**  
**Kladeos Trypes**  
**Kakouraiika**  
**Antheia Ellinika (ID1501)**  
**Englianos (ID5104)**  
**Volimidia (ID4340)**  
**Aristomenis: Trani Sykia**  
**Kato Rouga (Prophitis Elias)**  
**Pyla**  
**Proastio**  
**Iklaina (ID3313)**  
**Peristeri (ID314)**  
**Sykia (ID124)**  
**Ayios Vasileios**  
**Pellana Trypes**  
**Pellana: interchange**  
**Amyklai Spilakia**  
**Dafni Louria**  
**Palliki Skineas (ID2591)**  
**Aliveri**  
**Skyros Basales**  
**Salamis town**  
**Aegina town**  
**Kythera Viaradika (ID3805)**  
**Kythera Palaiopolis (ID2674)**  
**Amorgos Xylokeratidi**  
**Archangelos Vigli**  
**Gennadi**  
**Pylona Aspropilia**  
**Treis near Kremasti**  
**Aptera (ID1869)**

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**Kera near Kalyves**  
**Armenoi**  
**Sphakaki** (ID3654)  
**Pigi** (ID3613)  
**Pangalochori**  
**Kalochoraphitis**  
**Moni Maleviziou**  
**Palaikastro** (ID3582)  
**Tourloti** (ID2805)  
**Mochlos** (ID3578)  
**Maroulas** (ID3610)  
**Magnesia** (ID3657)  
**Herakleio: Poros** (ID2797)  
**Knossos**  
**Keratokambos Viannou** (ID3637)  
**Kentri Rousses** (ID6545)  
**Kastellos** (ID3596)  
**Karteros Agia Photeini** (ID2831)  
**Gazi**  
**Arsani** (ID3661)  
**Chania** (ID2849)  
**Melidoni Kophinas hill**  
**Karnari Temenous**  
**Müskebi Ortakent**  
**Pilavtepe near Milas**  
**Miletus Değirmentepe**

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**MAP 4:** Distribution of BCTs, pit-caves, double pits and shaft graves discovered in the last 25 years.

(a) Built chamber tombs (incl. hybrids) and 'built graves' (ca. 21 at 13 sites)

**Aerino**

**Dimini** (ID5094)

**Mitrou** (ID1359)

**Eleon** (ID5065)

**Sykia Desphinas** (ID5083)

**Kastrouli**

**Lazarides** (ID1928)

**Poros Tzanata**

**Vrysari (Goumenissa)**

**Portes**

**Sparta Psychiko**

**Agios Vasileios** (ID6125)

**Panaztepe**

(b) Pit-caves, double pit-caves, double pits (at least 54+, probably more, in 6 sites)

**Spata Kolikrepi**

**Glyka Nera** (ID5358)

**Sikyon** (ID4516)

**Arvanitis**

**Agia Agathi Malonas** (ID5594)

**Chania** (ID2849)

(c) Shaft graves (8 in 4 sites)

**Marathon Plasi**

**Ano Englianos** (ID5577)

**Chania Kouklaki plot** (ID2849)

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**MAP 5:** Distribution of ‘simple graves’ (mostly pits, cists and other tombs) discovered in the last 25 years.

**Marathon Plasi**

**Athenian Agora** (ID5893)

**Glyka Nera** (ID5358)

**Vari: Kamini** (ID4979)

**Vourvatsi** (ID2280)

**Eleon** (ID5065)

**Thebes** (ID3022)

**Vaskina Socha** (ID2420)

**Sparta Polydendro (Kози)** (ID2553)

**Agios Vasileios** (ID6125)

**Xagounaki** (ID4889)

**Almyros-Halos Agrielia** (ID4714)

**Kazanaki** (ID1102)

**Koryphoula** (ID5091)

**Gentiki** (ID6377)

**Prodromos**

**Palaiokastro Petrotou**

**Agriokeraso Karyas**

**Agnantero**

**Ermitsi**

**Makrychori**

**Asvestaria near Petroto**

**Spathes (Ayios Dimitrios)**

**Leivithra**

**Neoi Poroi Pigi Athinas** (ID5787)

**Platamonas Pigi Artemidos** (ID5755)

**Platamonas Rema Xydias** (ID5229)

**Aiani Livadia** (ID4565)

**Logas Elatis** (ID5747)

**Voulokalyva** (ID1045)

**Glypha Phanos (Antron)** (ID3487)

**Proskynas** (ID3092)

**Neochori (Mt Oeta)**

**Mitrou** (ID4214)

**Kirrha** (ID5430)

**Prosilio** (ID6170)

**Argos** (ID1435)

**Agia Eirene** (ID4508)

**Asprokambos Zoodochos Pigi**

**Aigion** (ID2097)

**Portes**

**Daphni Lakkathela** (ID1531)

**Strephi**

**Olympia (New Museum)**

**Kouvaras** (ID434)

**Chania Gavrolimnis** (ID2101)

**Katouna Perganti**

**Kokkino Lithari**  
**Psara Archontiki (ID1285)**  
**Dipi Lesvos**  
**Agia Agathi Malonas (ID5594)**  
**Chania (ID2849)**  
**Kera near Kalyves**  
**Panaztepe**

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**END OF MAPS**